

“You don’t know half the story”: Deepening the dialogue with young mothers...

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Research questions



- How do young mothers understand, experience and make sense of pregnancy and motherhood in the community?
- What role does a community house play in supporting and scaffolding the young women's experience as they transition to motherhood?
- What can be done to improve the social and cultural resources that support young mothers in the community?



What do these Community Spaces look like?



































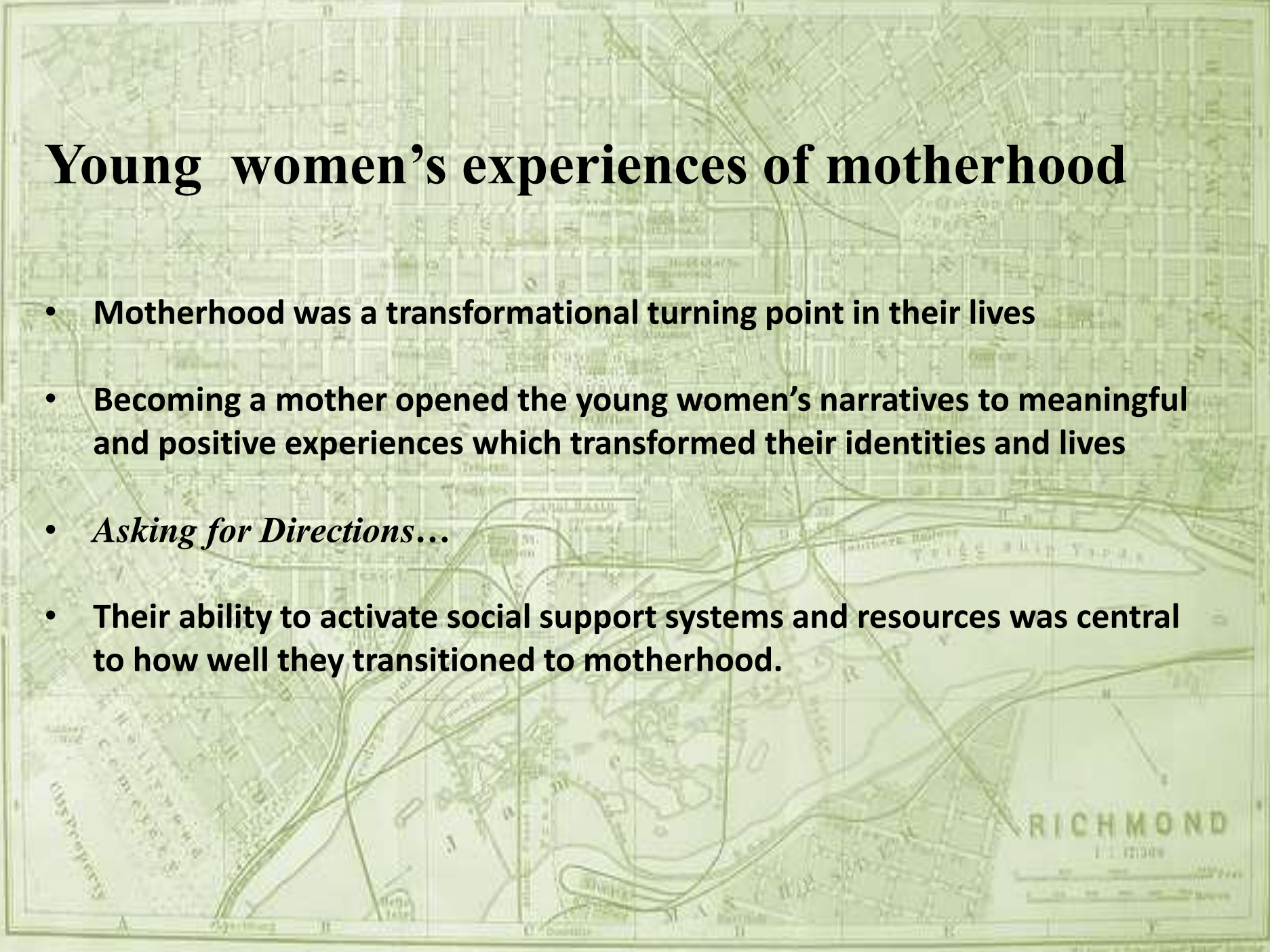
Finding the Stories...



- 7 months of field work at BLO4C (88 hours) collected data from 31 informants.
- 11 young mothers volunteered for in-depth narrative interviews (aged between 16-23 years at differing point of motherhood).
- Data included interview transcripts and observational and reflective notes collected during field work.

Young women's experiences of motherhood

- **Motherhood was a transformational turning point in their lives**
- **Becoming a mother opened the young women's narratives to meaningful and positive experiences which transformed their identities and lives**
- *Asking for Directions...*
- **Their ability to activate social support systems and resources was central to how well they transitioned to motherhood.**



Finding a circle of friends

I feel like everyone is happy to see us and the kids all love J. which is good, I love that... when you come here....it is fun and you feel the good side of being a mum, like you can still have fun and stuff...

Nicole

“Open”

“warm”

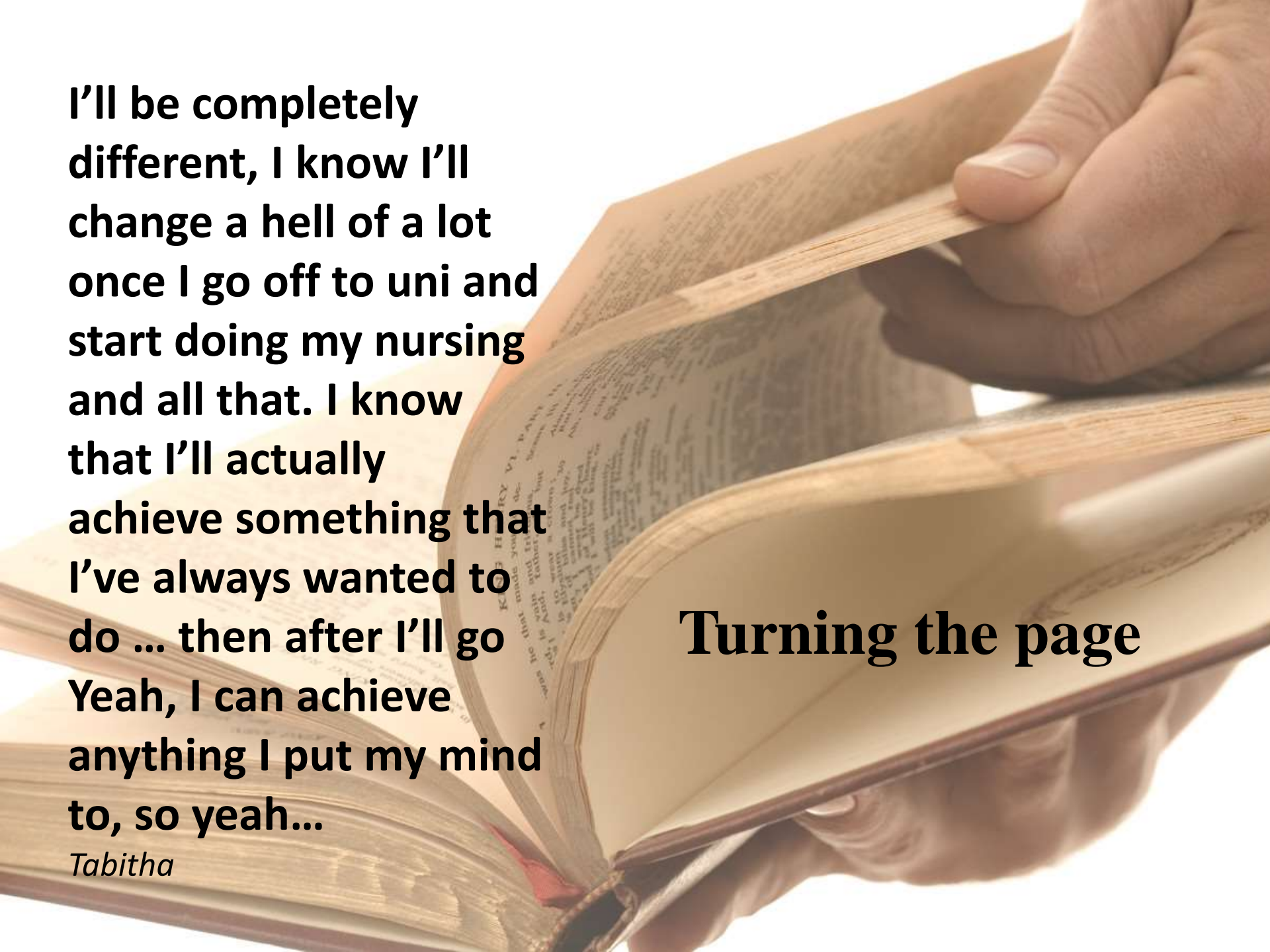
“relaxed”

“welcoming”

Weaving a Tapestry

Just different stories and things, just different people have different pregnancies, completely different, different kids, they act different. Different circumstances, different home lives and everything. You just, your eyes get opened up to how many different, you know, ways people live and stuff...

Rani



I'll be completely different, I know I'll change a hell of a lot once I go off to uni and start doing my nursing and all that. I know that I'll actually achieve something that I've always wanted to do ... then after I'll go Yeah, I can achieve anything I put my mind to, so yeah...

Tabitha

Turning the page

Pregnancy and motherhood is a significant turning point in young women's lives

**Aspiring to be “better mothers”
and live “better lives”**

Importance of community spaces

Judgement free spaces where young mothers feel a sense of belonging and social support are vital in promoting an enhanced sense of self, positive identity and autonomy in young women transitioning to motherhood.

Power of narrative and social learning

Foster spaces that encourage young women to acknowledge, reflect, share and witness each other's personal stories is a key element in developing the narrative capacity to actively construct alternate storylines

Recommendations

- We need to pursue a new vision for working with young mothers.
- Adopt a narrative approach to practice that includes deep listening and fostering safe spaces for trusting, respectful and caring relationships to form.
- Create community spaces that foster narrative encounters to reflect, shift and make meanings of their new motherhood experiences, including providing a valuable social learning space for developing health literacy.
- Value young mothers as the experts of their own lives




Finally...

- Stories are vehicles by which we learn important lessons in life, stories heal, instruct and speak sensitively and subtly to the reader.

(McAdams, 1993)





Reflections or Questions

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